

[IMAGE]

Corticosteroid Therapy Increases Fracture Risk

Corticosteroids are anti-inflammatory medications prescribed for the treatment of allergic conditions, asthma and other diseases. Many elderly patients take corticosteroids to treat chronic inflammatory and immune disorders, despite mounting evidence that corticosteroid use may accelerate bone loss.

Case in point: A recent study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* compared rates of vertebral deformities and vertebral fractures between 229 patients and 286 control subjects. Patients reported taking corticosteroids for at least six months' duration, whereas control subjects reported no prior use of corticosteroids.

Results showed that average lumbar spine and neck bone mineral density (BMD) were lower in corticosteroid patients with vertebral deformities than nonusers with deformities. These effects were maintained when adjusting for the effects of age, sex, body mass index, and duration of use. Older age also proved a significant risk factor for deformity: patients 70-79 years old had five times the risk as patients 60 years and younger.

If you're currently taking corticosteroids (or any medication), ask your doctor for more information on the potential dangers before you renew that prescription. Your doctor can also tell you about possible nonpharmaceutical options for managing your condition. For further information on the dangers of drugs, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/drugs/index.html>.

Reference:

Naganathan V, Jones G, Nash P, et al. Vertebral fracture risk with long-term corticosteroid therapy. Prevalence and relation to age, bone density, and corticosteroid use. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Oct. 23, 2000: Vol. 160, pp2917-22.

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